

Peace delegation to Iran says Stop U.S. war plans

By John Parker

A people-to-people delegation that included two members of the International Action Center arrived in Tehran, Iran, Oct. 9 to increase solidarity with the people of Iran, defend Iran’s sovereignty and stop the accelerated U.S. push for war against Iran.

An independent, Iranian nongovernmental organization made up of the largest student organizations in Iran had invited these delegates. This NGO aims to build anti-imperialist solidarity with Latin American countries. It is aptly named House of Latin America or HOLA, which is Spanish for “hello.” Some of HOLA’s activities have been to organize solidarity trips to Nicaragua and Venezuela and hosting a visit to Iran by the Young Communist League of Cuba. It has also set up the organization Solidarity with Iran or SI, which is promoting an appeal.

HOLA coordinators Amir Tareshi and Hamid Shahrabi spoke about the challenges to building solidarity with the progressive movement in the U.S. By standing the truth on its head, he said, the U.S. has given the impression that the Iranian government is dedicated to terrorism and corruption. The great desire of, not only the government, but every person, is for peace, he said.

After a powerful revolutionary upsurge led by Islamic forces overthrew the U.S.-installed shah in 1979, the new regime nationalized its oil and, with the use of this revenue, was able to counter the many years of corruption fed primarily by U.S. and British hegemony in Iran. The imperialists stole Iran’s wealth while the puppet shah and his hangers-on siphoned off enough to allow for their luxurious lifestyle. Once freed of imperialist control, Iran was able to dramatically increase health and education nationally using this revenue.

More than 65 percent of Iran’s university students are women, as are more than a third of the doctors. At the time of the 1979 Revolution, 90 percent of rural women were illiterate; even in towns the figure was 45 percent.

Now large numbers of increasingly well-educated women have been entering the work force.

Iran’s comprehensive social protection system is equally impressive. The resources allocated towards domestic necessities do not end at the Iranian border. More than \$8 billion went to aid Lebanon in rebuilding efforts following its defeat of an Israeli invasion.

Iran’s international solidarity efforts

The funds went directly to grassroots organizations like Hezbollah that, in spite of government inability, built homes and repaired infrastructure destroyed by U.S.-supplied bombs during Israeli bombing raids in the 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon. That effort contributed to the overwhelming response given to President Ahmadinejad by the Lebanese people last week.

In fact, solidarity delegates witnessed live on TV the many hundreds of thousands of well-wishers in Lebanon — not just the “thousands” reported in the Western media.

With regard to the flooding in Pakistan, the Iranian news agency Fars reports that early in October \$100 million was allocated for the reconstruction of the flood-hit areas in Pakistan, and, adding to that was the construction

of medical centers by Iran’s Red Crescent Society. Iran was among the first three countries which rushed to Pakistan’s aid after floods devastated large parts of the country, while at the same time the U.S. was busy spending taxpayer money to kill Pakistani soldiers and civilians from the air with expensive, high-tech drones and helicopters.

Because Iran combines this type of solidarity in the region with the increasingly mutually beneficial cooperation with the socialist government in Cuba and progressive governments like Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua, Washington sees Iran as a threat against the imperialist aims of U.S. banks, the military-industrial complex and big oil and calls it “terrorist.”

Criticisms of social inequality, religion in government and any other contradictions internal to Iran cannot be ignored. But ignoring facts omitted by the U.S. government narrative distorts the understanding of the overall U.S. aims in Iran.

The central point driven home very effectively by HOLA members was that Iran has become Western imperialism’s primary target. They stressed that the primary work of the anti-war movements, especially those in the U.S., should be to build solidarity with the defense of Iran and its right to self-determination, defending Iran from a U.S. or U.S.-sponsored attack. This same movement should allow the Iranian people to work out the internal contradictions within Iran themselves.

They pointed out how the program for using nuclear power for peaceful energy was started under the shah with U.S. support after reports that Iran’s oil would be depleted in 10 years. But after the 1979 revolution, Washington began opposing everything Iran did.

Imperialism’s attacks against Iran have already begun. HOLA activist Shahrabi told the delegation that over the decades of hostility, the U.S., Israel and the MKO organization have been responsible for the death of 16,300 Iranian civilians.

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Photo: freedompartynys.com

Charles Barron & Ramon Jimenez, left. Eva M. Doyle, above

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Demonstrators defend rights of lesbian couple at shopping mall in Raleigh, N.C. See page 6.

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Michigan State University

Activists protest handling of rape charges

By Megan Spencer
East Lansing, Mich.

In late August a woman reported being sexually assaulted in a dorm room by two members of the Michigan State University Spartans men’s basketball team. Despite the survivor reporting the assault, a police report being filed, and the police recommending the pursuit of criminal sexual conduct charges against the assailants, Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III decided not to press charges.

Dunnings initially concluded there was not enough evidence to prosecute the crime, though he has since gone as far as to declare that force or coercion did not occur, and thus “no crime” was committed. (Michigan Messenger, Sept. 29)

In addition to facing no legal consequences, the assailants still reside in university housing, attend classes at MSU, and remain on the basketball team. The circumstances indicate these individuals have committed rape, yet they face no repercussions for their actions.

In response to this assault, the prosecutor’s inaction and unwillingness to deliver any justice, and the university’s silence on the matter, a multinational group of concerned students at MSU united to form the Coalition Against Sexual Violence.

The university administration has failed to suspend or expel the players from MSU, and has not even released a statement condemning the assault. In addition, Residence Life, the department in charge of on-campus housing, has failed to remove the players from their dorm room, further endangering women at MSU. Neither the director of MSU’s Athletic Department, Mark Hollis, nor men’s basketball coach Tom Izzo has commented publicly on the assault.

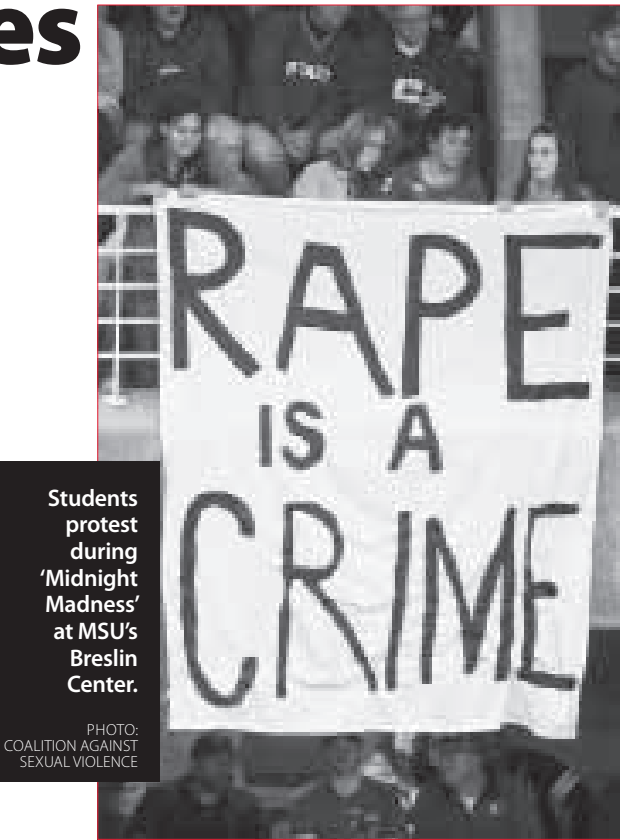
By failing to take action, punish the assailants or respond to this act of violence, MSU’s administration, Residence Life and the Athletic Department send the message that students can commit acts of sexual violence against other students without consequence. It also sends the message to survivors of sexual assault that their experiences are not significant to administrators, prosecutors and others with authority, thus discouraging future survivors from reporting assaults.

The coalition has met several times, with 15 to 20 people showing up to meetings. In addition, the coalition’s Facebook page has drawn more than 400 members. Coalition activists have been harassed and followed by police regarding leafleting and other visibility activities on campus. One member was threatened with conspiracy charges, and other activists have been followed by police while running errands both on and off campus. The coalition is outraged that the police are using scare tactics to try to discourage students from being activists against sexual violence.

Activists not ‘fans of rape’

Coalition members attended MSU’s homecoming parade on Oct. 15 and held posters that read, “Prosecute Rape,” “I’m not a fan of rape,” “Shame on Izzo — No Rape!” and “Rape is a crime no matter who you are!”

The protesters chanted as Izzo and the men’s basketball team rode by on a float. One of the basketball players held up his middle finger to the protesters and shouted



to one of the women, “F*ck you, B*tch.” Several other players laughed and took pictures of the protesters with their cell phones.

Later that night, a dozen or so coalition members held a demonstration outside the Breslin Center, where thousands of people waited in line for the “Midnight Madness,” an annual event that kicks off basketball season. The arena was filled to its capacity of over 16,000 people, with several thousand more being turned away.

During the event, which was nationally televised on the Big Ten Network, four women in the coalition unfurled two banners. One of them read, “Expel Rapists,” and the other read, “Rape Is a Crime.” An angry fan rushed to where two women were holding one of the banners and attempted to violently pull it away from the demonstrators.

A tug-of-war ensued between the demonstrators and the fan, but after several seconds the women were able to regain control of the banner and re-drop it over the upper bowl of the Breslin Center.

After several minutes, demonstrators were approached by Breslin Center staff members and instructed to let go of the banner. They were escorted by police outside of the arena and threatened with trespassing charges if they were to return. Angry fans yelled profanities as the demonstrators left the Breslin Center.

The coalition has contacted the MSU President LouAnna K. Simon, in addition to other administrators, as well as directors of Residence Life and the Athletic Department, and men’s basketball coach Tom Izzo, and demanded a meeting. Activists want explanations as to why none of these departments have opened independent investigations regarding the assault. President Simon responded to the concerns of the coalition by promising they would be contacted by MSU administrators regarding a meeting. This has yet to happen.

The coalition will continue to have actions to raise awareness about this case and to pressure the prosecutor’s office, MSU administrators and MSU Athletics to speak out and act against sexual violence.

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FREE THE SCOTT SISTERS

Prominent Black writer draws attention to injustice

By Monica Moorehead

The 16-year struggle to free Jamie and Gladys Scott from a Mississippi prison has caught the significant attention of a progressive African-American journalist. Bob Herbert, who writes for the New York Times on a regular basis, penned two op-ed pieces within three days of each other exposing the injustice that the African-American sisters have suffered and calling for their immediate release.

In his Oct. 12 column, entitled “So Utterly Inhumane,” Herbert gives a brief history of this tragic incident of racist injustice in the South. The Scott sisters were just 19 and 21 when they were arrested in December 1993 for a store robbery of \$11 near Forest, Miss. No one was hurt and it was the sisters’ first charge.

The three teenagers who admitted to taking the money testified that they were pressured by the authorities to implicate the Scott sisters in order to gain an early parole date. The teenagers eventually served two years of an eight-year sentence. The sisters were sent to prison in 1994 with two life sentences each.

Despite the three teenagers’ admissions of guilt in court, appeal after appeal demanding that the two sisters be set free based on their innocence has been turned down by the courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. In the meantime, Jamie Scott has developed stage-four kidney failure due to inhumane prison conditions, including a poor diet. She has faced numerous life-threatening medical crises because prison authorities have not provided timely dialysis treatments.

Herbert writes, “This is a case that should be repugnant to anyone with the slightest interest in justice. The right thing to do at this point is to get the sisters out of prison as quickly as possible and ensure that Jamie gets proper medical treatment.” (www.nytimes.com, Oct. 12)

In his Oct. 15 “The Mississippi Pardons” column, Herbert focuses on the power that Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour has to carry out pardons, including for prisoners convicted of first-degree murder. Herbert contacted the Mississippi Department of Corrections, which confirmed that on June 16, 2008, Barbour pardoned

five people serving life sentences. Herbert went on to say that these five people were assigned to a special prison program where they worked in the governor’s mansion.

“The idea that those men could be freed from prison and allowed to pursue whatever kind of lives they might wish while the Scott sisters are kept locked up, presumably for the rest of their lives, is beyond disturbing,” states Herbert.

The sisters’ attorney, Chokwe Lumumba, along with the national president of the NAACP, Ben Jealous, have called on



Jamie Scott

Gladys Scott

Gov. Barbour to use his executive powers, which overrule any decisions made by the state parole board, to free the sisters.

Go to www.freethescottsisisters.blogspot.com for more information and to get involved in the campaign to free the Scott sisters. □

Slave labor continues in Georgia

By Louise Covington
Atlanta

Lakeland, Ga., is a small town that is 67 percent white, 29 percent African-American and 0.7 percent Native American. The average salary of working males is \$29,257 and females \$19,276, with most residents living below the 2000 poverty level. Nonetheless, the city of Lakeland is building a state-of-the-art city hall and police department that will cost the city a projected \$600,000.

According to Lakeland’s mayor, Bill Darsey, the city will save on wages because it will be using free labor — prison labor. The ruse here is that prisoners will learn a skill they supposedly can use when once released.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census,

the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world with 754 out of every 100,000 people imprisoned. That’s almost 1 percent of the country’s population in jail, including 92,854 juveniles. African Americans, who make up just 12 percent of the U.S. population, constitute 44 percent of the prison population. That is an enormously disproportionate rate.

Mayor Darsey went on to state that the construction project’s electrical work, unpaid for rather than being done by skilled paid labor, saved the city \$30,000.

Lakeland has an unemployment rate of 11.8 percent. Men and women living in poverty and seeking work cannot compete with the free labor of prisoners. These prisoners will not receive any wages and most likely will not be able to obtain work upon release because of the

stigma of being a felon.

Clayton County, Ga., prisoners are being used to clean and maintain foreclosed homes now owned by banks. The continued use of free unskilled prison labor pits these men and women against their fellow unemployed workers on the outside. Georgia’s Department of Prisoners has asserted that they have “right to work” laws on their side. These racist laws are based on the South’s plantation system in the time of slavery.

The South was built on the backs of African Americans and indentured slaves who, like today’s prisoners, have no say in how their labor can be used. The South’s “right to work” laws are a continuous block to organizing by unions and a major factor in the superexploitation of Southern workers. □

Innocence almost impossible to prove

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Fighting to abolish the death penalty is frustrating. But for a person wrongly convicted and sentenced to death, fighting to prove their innocence can be worse than frustrating. It can be almost impossible. It can be so maddening that it causes debilitating mental illnesses and suicide.

People know of the cases of Troy Davis in Georgia and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal in Pennsylvania due to the political organizing around their cases that has resulted in some national media coverage.

Now two people in Texas are in the national spotlight: Hank Skinner and Todd Willingham.

Skinner has always insisted he was innocent. It sounds easy when he says, “Just test the DNA. If I am guilty, you can execute me. If I am innocent, I am out of here.”

But the district attorney in Pampa, Texas, refuses to turn over the DNA for testing. The U.S. Supreme Court heard Skinner’s case on Oct. 13 and a ruling should come in early 2011. Skinner told Workers World, “What are they afraid of? Just test the DNA. ... If I am finally released, I am moving to Paris, France, to live with my wife. After the hell I have been through, there’s no way I will live in this country.”

Willingham was executed in Texas in 2004 after fighting to prove his innocence for over 12 years. Texas Gov. Rick Perry had a comprehensive report from arson expert Dr. Gerald Hurst on his desk weeks



César Roberto Fierro, at age 20 ... and, after 25 years of torment on death row.

before the execution. Hurst said, “There’s nothing to suggest to any reasonable arson investigator that this was an arson fire. It was just a fire.” Perry ignored the report and allowed the execution.

Willingham’s family is still trying to prove his innocence. On Oct. 14, attorneys for the family held a Court of Inquiry in Judge Charlie Baird’s Austin court room. They presented compelling evidence that could result in Judge Baird declaring Willingham innocent. But the D.A. in Corsicana, Texas, went to the Third Court of Appeals and got an injunction ordering the hearing halted. Baird cannot make a decision. But attorney Barry Scheck from the Innocence Project will appeal the injunction by Oct. 22 and said, “We have the law on our side.”

On Oct. 19, the Public Broadcasting System’s Frontline aired “Death by Fire,” a documentary closely examining the evidence used to convict Willingham. It focuses on a critical finding that was revealed just weeks before Willingham’s execution — that fire investigators apparently relied on outdated arson science to determine that Willingham had set the fire that killed his children.

If Willingham is declared innocent, he would be the first executed person in the U.S. to be posthumously exonerated.

But most innocence cases never make the news until a person walks out of prison a free man or a free woman.

On Oct. 20, Anthony Pierce, on Texas death row for 33 years, will be in court for a new sentencing trial ordered by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. Because his family has no money and his mother, Earlene Pierce, is elderly, ill and is not able to work at age 75, Pierce cannot hire the investigators needed to prove his innocence.

Pierce has consistently refused plea deals for a lesser sentence. Pierce told Workers World, “I’ll never plead guilty to a crime I did not commit. No way. I’ll fight until I can prove my innocence or until they kill me.”

Another likely innocent person can no longer fight to prove his innocence. César Fierro has become so mentally ill that he no longer communicates with anyone, including his attorneys, other prisoners or prison staff. He urinates and defecates on himself and does not bathe, shave or cut his hair. He has withdrawn into a world in which only he lives.

After his arrest for the murder of an El Paso taxi driver in 1979, the El Paso cops called the police in Juárez, Mexico, to pick up Fierro’s parents. They put his father on the phone with Fierro, who told him the cops would torture his mother if he didn’t confess. He signed the confession and has been on death row since February 1980.

After information about the confession came out, the El Paso district attorney said he would not have tried Fierro if he had known the confession was coerced.

No court has given relief, and now Fierro is at the Jester Unit psychiatric prison awaiting execution.

The Texas prison admits to nine suicides on death row since 1974, but many deaths are listed on their Web page as “died of natural causes.” Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement activist Njeri Shakur says, “I believe that other suicides have not been recorded as such and some prison officials may think suicide is a natural death. The fact is that total isolation in a supermax prison is driving prisoners insane, the guilty and the innocent alike.”

There have been 1,229 people executed in the U.S. since executions resumed in 1976, and there have been 138 people released from death row with evidence of their innocence.

Of course not everyone on death row is innocent. But with DNA testing and with more and more prisoners being released, support for capital punishment is dwindling, fewer juries are sentencing people to death, and fewer executions are taking place.

According to Shakur, “We are fighting for the day when this country no longer terrorizes the poor and oppressed communities with legal lynchings. That day will come. We hope innocent men like Hank Skinner, Howard Guidry, Jeff Wood and César Fierro are alive on that day.”

Gloria Rubac is a founder of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement.

‘Real solidarity isn’t tiered’ GM workers fight 50-percent wage cut

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

To say members of UAW Local 5960 are angry would be an understatement.

Since General Motors emerged from bankruptcy last year after coercing UAW members to grant huge concessions, workers at the company’s idled Lake Orion, Mich., assembly plant have been waiting to learn the details of some new, supposedly “innovative ways to staff these operations.” This vague language in the contract modifications was supposed to lead to a plant-specific agreement to bring them back to work building a subcompact vehicle — one that would otherwise be produced south of the border.

“Shock and awe” could well describe the state of mind of line workers who have just recently learned that the 40 percent of them with the lowest seniority will be called back to work at only half the wages they made before being laid off. They are furious at GM and also at the International of the UAW, first for agreeing to such an outrageous settlement and second for not even allowing the membership to vote on it.

More than 200 Local 5960 members and their supporters rallied Oct. 16 outside the UAW’s international headquar-

ters, Solidarity House, under the theme, “Real Solidarity isn’t tiered.” There were dozens of homemade, heartfelt signs. Among the slogans were “Equal Pay for Equal Work” and “One Union, One Tier.”

The children of Paul Maturen and Dawn Maturen carried a sign that read, “Our Daddy isn’t half a man and there are no half people.” Paul is a soon-to-be second-tier Lake Orion worker. Dawn Maturen co-organized the protest with Local 5960 worker Nick Waun.

“The CEO of GM makes nine million a year,” Waun told the crowd. “That’s enough to carry 300 workers at top-tier pay.”

A number of UAW activists spoke in solidarity with Local 5960. Among them were former Local 235 President Wendy Thompson, former International Representative Frank Hammer, Local 600 Committeemember Gary Walkowicz and GM retiree Stacey Kemp. Ford retiree Ron Lare read statements of solidarity from autoworkers in Brazil and Canada.

Greg Clark, shop chair of Local 23, was warmly welcomed. Local 23 in Indianapolis recently shot down a concessionary deal to get supplier JD Norman to buy their plant and cut their pay by almost 50 percent. UAW members came from Indianapolis and from Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky to show solidarity.

The high point came when Olen Ham, one of the last living participants in the 1936-37 sit-down strike, addressed the crowd. It was that 44-day occupation involving four GM plants in Flint, Mich., and others around the country that forced GM to recognize the UAW. “They want you to go back to the days of nonunion wages and benefits,” said Ham. “Do not back up.”

A line must be drawn

Two-tier was first introduced in the airline industry in the 1980s, but is now a widespread tactic for lowering wages. Up until now the lower wage scale was negotiated for future employees, while workers with higher seniority kept their same higher rate of pay. This was a menace to solidarity, as some workers wound up doing the same work as others for half the pay. As those UAW members with higher seniority retired, leaving a majority of lower-wage workers, companies like Caterpillar, American Axle and Delphi were able to bring everyone’s pay down to the lowest tier. It’s hard to claim to be pro-labor and defend two-tier.

The Lake Orion situation poses a new danger to the labor movement. Here we have a large segment of the workforce accustomed to the “traditional” wage sud-

denly and arbitrarily forced into the bottom tier. The goal of GM is to make the entire plant second-tier.

Management’s pretext is that paying lower wages is the only way GM can make profits on low-budget, subcompact vehicles such as the Chevrolet Aveo built in Lake Orion. In fact, the plant will also build a higher-end compact, the Buick Verano.

The correct response from the UAW would be, “So you can’t make big bucks on the Aveo, so what? You made \$2.2 billion in six months. We have to keep a roof over our heads and eat and we would like our kids to get a college degree. They’ll be hard-pressed to find a good-paying job without one, especially in Michigan. That’s more important.”

Unfortunately, UAW International President Bob King has embraced the capitalist position that all the company’s plants must be profitable.

The UAW is up against formidable foes — not only in Detroit but on Wall Street. On Sept. 13, after the announcement that there would be an initial public offering of GM stock in November, the Wall Street Journal wrote that “the UAW’s no-strike pledge at GM expires in 2015. ... The UAW’s contract with the car companies is about as thick as the phone book in a medium-sized city. Only when the contract shrinks to the size of a pamphlet will investors know things have changed. The union contract should be attached as an exhibit to the offer prospectus, because it’s so critical to the company’s future. ... Hopefully ... the UAW will reinvent itself to become a partner instead of an impediment.”

Instead of an impediment to profits, the UAW International’s partnership with GM — and Ford, Chrysler and the supplier firms — is the biggest obstacle to rank-and-file workers who want to resist.

At the protest, some of the signs said, “Kickin’ ass for the working class.” The young workers holding those signs represent the future of the UAW — and they are keeping alive its proud history of struggle.

The writer, a member of Local 869, also spoke at the Oct. 16 rally.

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Protesters hit

On the popular morning ABC show, “The View,” guest Bill O’Reilly went off on a spree of verbally violent attacks on the Muslim community in the U.S. He went so far that co-hosts Whoopi Goldberg and Joy Behar walked out of the show, a rare event on TV, to show their resistance to his vicious remarks.

Inspired by the actions of the two stars, the United National Anti-war Coalition and some of its constituent organizations called for a public protest on Oct. 17 outside the doors of Fox News in midtown Manhattan. That afternoon, people from around the region, many from Muslim organizations, came out to protest Fox’s Islamaphobia.

Continued on next page

Low-Wage Capitalism

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PHILADELPHIA Poverty, hunger on the rise

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

According to U.S. Census data released in September, more than 29 percent of residents in Philadelphia’s 1st Congressional District — just a few miles from the historic Liberty Bell — live in poverty. Overall census data found Philadelphia to be the poorest among the country’s 10 largest cities, and the 1st District one of the hungriest, second only to the Bronx, N.Y.

The 1st District includes parts of North, West and South Philadelphia as well as Chester, Pa. In one section of north Philadelphia near Fifth Street and Lehigh Avenue, 63 percent of residents live in poverty — many going days without eating. Ironically the 1st District also includes some of Philadelphia’s most opulent neighborhoods, including Center City, Northern Liberties and Society Hill.

Children are the hardest hit by this economic deprivation. In 2009 child poverty in the 1st District stood at 40 percent, the eighth worst congressional district in the country.

Across the U.S. one in five children live in poverty. In Philadelphia this figure is one in three.

What do these statistics mean in terms of the reality of everyday life for residents of these neighborhoods? On Oct. 10 the Philadelphia Inquirer ran a major article, “A Portrait of Hunger” by Alfred Lubrano, who interviewed several families in the 1st District about their struggles to feed their families.

For many it means not having enough money to buy food or having to choose between buying food or paying rent. For some it means limiting food intake to one meal a day or even going days without eating. Children often go to school hungry, impacting their ability to learn. Families struggle to subsist on income subsidies that may be less than 50 percent of poverty level.

Melissa Scott, a mother of five children ages two to 10, told the Inquirer, “I go days eating nothing. My husband eats once a day.” Sherita Parks spoke of the impact of chronic hunger on her two-year-old daughter, who suffers from a condition known as failure to thrive. “She doesn’t get enough food and it affects her brain. ... She can’t even tell me when she’s hungry.” Dinner for Parks’ children consisted of a cut-up hot dog and a few Cheerios. (Philadelphia Inquirer, Oct. 10)

With 300,000 jobs lost between 1950 and 1980, many families in the area have suffered from generation after generation of poverty even before the current economic crisis. Because proper nutrition is vital to brain growth, many of the children in this area have experienced severe developmental delays from one generation to the next.

Food stamps program shrinks

With more restricted eligibility requirements for federal food stamp programs since 2006, only one in 10 of nearly 43 million people in the U.S. living below the poverty level of \$22,050 for a family of four received welfare cash benefits in 2009.

The limited jobs bill passed by Congress in August, allegedly aimed at saving 318,000 state and local education and health care jobs, cut \$11.9 billion from the food stamps program. On Aug. 5, the Senate passed the so-called “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act,” which cut another \$2.2 billion from food stamps. Yet since late 2007 there has been a 50 percent increase in the number of people receiving food stamps in the U.S. Eighty percent of the funds go to families with children.

For decades the federal government has kept food prices artificially high through U.S. Department of Agriculture programs that pay farmers not to grow food, or more recently to divert land previously used for

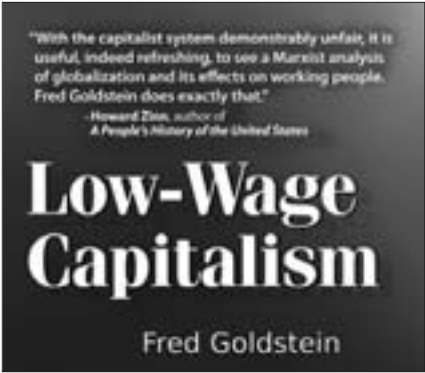
growing food crops to production of crops for export or for biofuels. Such subsidies often benefit the wealthiest agricultural companies to the detriment of small family farms or imports from other countries.

The U. S. pays around \$20 billion per year to farmers in direct subsidies that give agribusiness farmers extra money for their crops and guarantee a minimum return. U.S. farm subsidies cost poor countries an estimated \$50 billion a year in lost agricultural exports while raising global food prices, further harming the poor and increasing malnutrition.

Eric deCarbonnel, editor of MarketSkeptics, points to a steady decline in global food production since 2005. He predicts a further drop of between 20 to 40 percent due to severe drought, a decline in available credit making it harder for farmers to buy seed and fertilizer, and low prices that are discouraging farmers from planting new crops.

DeCarbonnel predicts that “food prices will soar, and, in poor countries with food deficits, millions will starve.” (Global Research, Feb. 10, 2009)

The global food crisis brings into sharp focus the deep contradictions of capitalism with its productive apparatus capable of growing enough food for all the world’s people, but hampered by a profit-driven, market economy that prices life’s basic necessities beyond reach for millions. □



USING NOV. 2 ELECTIONS AS A PLATFORM

Freedom Party challenges racist status quo

By Monica Moorehead
New York

The Black and Latino/a-led Freedom Party is attempting to get a minimum of 50,000 votes in the Nov. 2 midterm elections in New York State in order to secure ballot status. One of the FP's main goals is to challenge the decades-long, oppressive stranglehold that the big business, pro-war Republican and Democratic parties have had, a hold that keeps workers and oppressed peoples economically and politically powerless.

Gubernatorial candidate Andrew Cuomo, for example, leads the Democratic Party's all-white slate in New York State. The DP reportedly spent more than \$26 million on the election so far.

In contrast, the FP slate is led by two African-American candidates — NYC Councilperson Charles Barron for governor and educator Eva M. Doyle for lieutenant governor. Puerto Rican attorney and professor Ramon Jimenez is running for attorney general. The FP has raised less than \$32,000 for the election.

Many FP supporters view this progressive slate as an expression of the right to self-determination in the area of political representation and to help build an independent base of power in oppressed communities that have been historically and systematically disenfranchised and marginalized by majority white ruling-class structures.

The FP slate also demands jobs, housing, education, health care and mass transportation for all, not corporate welfare for the banks and big real estate developers.

Viola Plummer, a co-chairperson of the FP, spoke on Oct. 16 at a Workers World Party forum in Manhattan. Plummer is also a leader and founder of the Brooklyn-based December 12th Movement. She is a former political prisoner and is presently the chief of staff for NYS Assemblyperson Inez Barron.

Plummer opened her remarks by commenting on her long, collaborative relationship with WWP, especially with its



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Freedom Party volunteer Collette Pean, Larry Holmes, Viola Plummer, Larry Hales and LeiLani Dowell.

late chairperson, Sam Marcy. The following are excerpts from Plummer's remarks at this forum. Go to www.workers.org to see the podcast. For more information on the FP, go to www.freedompartynys.com or e-mail mail@freedompartynys.com. Other speakers at the forum included WWP members Larry Hales, LeiLani Dowell and Larry Holmes.

Viola Plummer's comments at Oct. 16 meeting

I am glad to be among the people who are talking about what I am talking about. I am a communist. I believe from each according to their ability, to each according to their need. I believe that those of us who work and produce must partake in the wealth we produce.

Black & Latino-led — no question about it. Why? Because we believe that one of the chief and most vicious contradictions we've got to eliminate is racism.

— Viola Plummer

I believe that with your help and the help of as many Black and Latino people as we can get, we can make the Freedom Party at least get onto that stage.

Will it be the kind of party we know it must be eventually? I don't know, but I believe it can be.

I believe that if we really work to make sure that the Freedom Party is on the ballot and that the Freedom Party is a party that is going to be representative of the masses

of our people, the masses of working people, the masses of Black and Latino people, we can make that happen.

Because there is no contradiction between those of us who work who are Black and Latino and those of us that work and are not

Black and Latino. What the contradiction is that we have been used one against the other. That racism is a hell of a monster and it permeates everything.

I believe that in the Freedom Party we can close that gap. There is no question about getting 50,000 votes. We can do that. We got 43,000 signatures on the petitions.

But what we must at least have in our eyesight is getting 1 percent of the electorate in the state of New York [on Nov. 2].

If we do that we are talking about a for real Freedom Party, and we are talking about a Freedom Party that must and at its inception be inclusive of everybody.

Black and Latino-led — no question about it. Why? Because we believe that one of the chief and most vicious contradictions we've got to

eliminate is racism.

We have taken the position historically that the roots of slavery and institutional racism are economic. If we begin to attack the root, we can then move to the destruction of capitalism.

There was not a bill where large corporations came in to raid the city and our taxpayers that he [Charles Barron] wasn't the only one who would vote against it, i.e., the building of Yankee stadium, Mets stadium, etc. Charles' vote [in city council] was consistent and tried to point out the fallacy.

On Nov. 9, when the Freedom Party goes [to Philadelphia] to support Mumia, it will be a mass party. People make revolution. If we get the people out, we change fundamentally the relationship of the people to the electoral, political system. If I say Freedom, you say Party. Freedom! Party! Freedom! Party! □

Fox TV's anti-Muslim bigotry



Picketing outside Fox Studio.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Anti-war conference Nov. 6

This was the first public local New York City action by UNAC, which held a national conference last July in Albany, N.Y. The group has also called a regional conference for Nov. 6 at St. Marks Church in the Bowery, at 10th Street and Second

Avenue, from noon to 4 p.m. The meeting will take up concrete plans for an anti-war demonstration set for April 9, 2011, that was voted on at the Albany meeting. Dozens of greater New York organizations plan to participate.

For more information, see nationalpeaceconference.org. □

Hands off Harlem Hospital!

By Tsehai Hiwot
Harlem, N.Y.

Defenders of Harlem Hospital assembled on Oct. 13 to support the Doctors Council SEIU, who are fighting the assault on patient services and opposing the imminent layoffs of 20 or more doctors. Recently North General Hospital was shut down and is now a clinic.

Harlem Hospital, which is the only public hospital left serving the Harlem community, is a historic pillar in the community. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a patient at the hospital after a stabbing in 1958. Harlem Hospital caters to the needs of its community by having a special asthma clinic — asthma rates are higher in inner city districts. There are also substance abuse programs, neurosurgery, dermatology, neonatal programs and more.

Columbia University is severing its affiliation with the hospital effective January 1, 2011. The Health and Hospitals Corporation, which controls public hospitals, has initiated budget cuts to close a \$1.2 billion budget gap.

At the rally and demonstration across the street from Harlem Hospital on 135th St and Lenox Avenue, workers, doctors, and Harlem residents and supporters

marched vigorously carrying signs and chanting, "Hey hey, ho ho, doctor layoffs got to go!" and "No justice, no peace!" among other chants. One angry woman said, "You don't know the half of it — when the money was there, Columbia was there, and when the money was gone, Columbia was gone."

Speakers showing solidarity with the doctors and workers at Harlem Hospital included Freedom Party gubernatorial candidate Charles Barron, U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, former New York Mayor David Dinkins and the Rev. Al Sharpton. They spoke of their respect and regard for the famed institution and vowed to do whatever it takes to protect the hospital, which is so vital to the health and lives of those in Harlem.

It is not fair to take this hospital and shrink it to shreds — and then across the street you can see work being done to expand the structure. For what? Why have a hospital with no doctors and no services? Maybe this is a sneak attack for the developers to build condos or more space for Columbia University. We must not let this happen! Save Harlem Hospital!

The writer's grandfather, Louis Charles Kincaid, was the first African-American plumber employed at Harlem Hospital.

Hundreds act to end bullying of lesbian couple

By Scott Williams
Raleigh, N.C.

Some 200 people rallied at a Raleigh shopping center Oct. 17 to support a lesbian couple. A security guard had ejected the couple from the property three days earlier for displaying affection towards one another.

Holding signs which read, “Being OUT Saves Lives” and “Bullying: Just Another Word for Violence,” the energetic crowd denounced the ejection as yet another incidence of bullying and oppression of lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer people.

Caitlin Breedlove, one of the women ejected from the Cameron Village Shopping Center, connected issues of privatization of public space with the rights of oppressed people. Speaking to the demonstrators, she said that “even on private property, LGBTQ people have the right to respect and safety. Only by reclaiming public space as our own, so we can be who we are everywhere!”

Breedlove, an activist with Southerners on New Ground, an organization of working-class people, people of color, immigrants and rural LGBTQ people based in the South, made the strong connections between oppression based on race, class,

gender and sexuality. “Only by harnessing the power of unity to demand dignity” can the struggle to end oppression win, said Breedlove.

Imani Henry, a trans activist and co-founder of Rainbow Flags for Mumia, gave a fiery speech to the crowd, declaring, “This is not an issue of just two individuals. It is systematic. The bashing and murdering of LGBTQ people across the country occurs all of the time. The reality is that the media and ultimately the U.S. government don’t want to talk about why there are not equal protections for the



Caitlin Breedlove tells supporters: ‘Harness the power of unity to demand dignity.’ Below, Raleigh, N.C.

WW PHOTOS: SCOTT WILLIAMS

safety and dignity of LGBTQ people.”

Due to the outpouring of support for the couple, including thousands of e-mails to the property owners, all of their demands have been met. York Properties, the owner of the shopping mall as well as many other Raleigh properties, is now requiring all security guards to participate in anti-oppression trainings. Breedlove and her partner were also given a written apology for their ejection by the property owner.

Immediately following the rally, participants were invited to the “snuggle-in” in the shopping center. LGBTQ and heterosexual couples transformed the shopping center into a queer-positive space, one where everyone can be treated with respect and dignity.

At a moment when we see the heartbreaking suicides of young people who are lesbian, gay, bi or trans or perceived



as such by their peers, we also see a strong movement to resist homophobia and bullying. Just several days before the ejection of the couple from Cameron Village was National Coming Out Day — Oct. 11 — a day in which thousands of people spread a message of support for the equality and safety of LGBTQ people.

The show of unity with the couple ejected from Cameron Village is just one more example of how the struggle for LGBTQ liberation, connected to the struggle against the oppression of women, immigrants, workers and people of color, can win victory over the oppressors and take us one step closer to the kind of world in which we deserve to live. □

Protesters assail anti-gay candidate

By Beverly Hiestand
Buffalo, N.Y.

Protestors from lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer communities — joined by supporters including union members and progressive activists — gathered at Carl Paladino’s campaign headquarters in downtown Buffalo on two successive afternoons the week of Oct. 11. They were there to speak out against the New York State gubernatorial candidate’s latest anti-gay rantings. More than 100 protestors assembled each day.

Speakers denounced the effect that Paladino’s encouragement of bigotry, including homophobia and racism, has on everyone’s struggles.

People who were there from the labor unions also addressed the threat that Paladino represents to all workers and oppressed people, especially in the fight for jobs. Several spoke to the fact that these protests were against a common enemy and that they were there together to support each other. □

Chicago mass rally opposes Afghan war

By Workers World Chicago Bureau

More than 1,000 people marched Oct. 16 through downtown Chicago in a Midwest anti-war action marking the ninth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Some 50 international solidarity and social justice organizations staged the demonstration under the slogans, “End the wars and occupations now!” and “Money for human needs, not corporate greed!” Participants came from Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota, as well as the Chicago area.

Protestors assailed the Obama administration for escalating the war in Afghanistan and killing civilians in Pakistan; for the continuing occupation of Iraq with troops and “contractors;” for the continued U.S.-Israeli occupation of Palestine and siege of Gaza; for the U.S.-backed 2009 coup against the elected president of Honduras; and for heightened attacks on civil liberties and free speech in the U.S.



PHOTO: CHICAGO INDYMEDIA

Oct. 16 anti-war march in Chicago.

The march bristled with signs in support of the 14 activists in Chicago, Minnesota and Michigan who were hit on Sept. 24 by grand jury subpoenas and FBI-led raids on their homes. March organizers declared their defense to be a focus of the action, welcomed three of them as speak-

ers at the opening rally including Mick Kelly and Stephanie Weiner, and raised funds for their legal defense.

Participants also demanded that the war budget be redirected to meet the crises of unemployment, foreclosures, evictions and public education. □

Afghan leads Philly anti-war action



WW PHOTO: BERTA JOUBERT-CECI

Afghan activist M. Shalalemi and children from the Poor Peoples’ Economic Human Rights Campaign led a march in Philadelphia on Oct. 16 calling for an end to the war. More than 100 people marched from City Hall to a rally at the Federal Building around

the ninth anniversary of the start of the U.S. war in Afghanistan. Several speakers addressed the impact of prolonged military spending on the economy at home, as well as recent FBI raids against anti-war and solidarity activists. — Betsey Piette

Georgia’s racist policy targets immigrant students

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

The level of anti-immigrant bias in the state of Georgia went up another notch with the passage on Oct. 13 of a measure banning undocumented students from attending certain public universities.

The Board of Regents governs the University system which includes research-level schools like the University of Georgia in Athens, other 4-year colleges such as Savannah State, two-year community colleges and technical schools.

Admitting that there was no factual

basis for right-wing charges that undocumented students were unfairly “displacing” other applicants, the Board members with one exception voted to disallow the admission of any undocumented student — no matter how highly qualified — at any of the top five universities if anyone who had met the requirements had been denied entrance in the past two years. The result of this new rule is that immigrant students who do not have legal status will not be admitted to UGA, Georgia Tech, and Georgia State, for example, regardless of how high their test scores are because

Continued on page 10

After FBI raids

Meetings around country build support for Midwest activists

By Abayomi Azikiwe and Cheryl LaBash

On Oct. 19 the office phones of U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and President Barack Obama are expected to ring all day as they did a week earlier. Concerned labor, community and anti-war callers will demand that the government end repression of anti-war and international solidarity activists, return all materials seized in the raids on their homes and office in September and call off the grand jury.

The action day in solidarity with the 14 people and the Minneapolis anti-war committee raided and subpoenaed by the FBI on Sept. 24 will coincide with the third date for grand jury interrogation. The final group of those targeted, as those summoned earlier, also asserted their right to decline the Inquisition invitation.

Although the prosecutor withdrew the subpoenas after everyone refused to participate, no one believes this fight against government repression is over. The grand jury has not been disbanded. Arrests, or subpoenas offering immunity — forcing activists to talk under the threat of imprisonment — are possibilities.

National meeting set Nov. 6 in NYC

The Committee to Stop FBI Repression is convening a national meeting in New York City on Nov. 6 at 6:30 p.m. and inviting all those interested in building the movement against FBI raids and the Grand Jury. The committee email states that “while the attack is bad, it offers our movement an opportunity to unite, strengthen, and grow!”

On Oct. 13, a meeting took place at Central United Methodist Church in Detroit to further advance the work in defense of those who have been targeted and to inform the activist community and the public in general of the significance of the attacks on several organizations as well as the ongoing persecution of the Islamic and

other oppressed communities in the U.S.

The call for the meeting was issued by representatives of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI) along with longtime civil rights Attorney William Goodman and retired Judge Claudia Morcom, both of whom are veteran members of the National Lawyers Guild. Over 40 people attended the meeting and voted to form a Detroit Committee to Stop FBI-Grand Jury Repression.

A delegation from the Detroit and Michigan chapters of the National Lawyers Guild attended the meeting. John Royal, who is the president of both the Detroit and Michigan chapters, gave a brief presentation on the history of grand juries in the U.S. and how they are increasingly being used to suppress dissent and opposition to both domestic and foreign policies of the government. During grand jury proceedings, the person subpoenaed cannot have a lawyer in the room while they are being questioned by government prosecutors.

Royal said that a recent Supreme Court ruling in the case of Eric Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project, where the justices redefined the meaning of “material aid to terrorism,” may be the basis for the recent raids and grand jury subpoenas. The Humanitarian Law Project in the U.S. had been targeted for providing legal assistance to people thought to be associated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, a Marxist liberation movement in Turkey, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), a movement seeking self-determination for the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka.

In addition, information considered hearsay or even false can be utilized to build indictments against targeted individuals and organizations. All 14 activists who were either raided or subpoenaed are associated with the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, the Minnesota Coalition for a People’s Bail Out, Women Against

Military Madness, the Students for a Democratic Society and the Minnesota Antiwar Committee, among other groups.

Other activists were visited by the FBI in the aftermath of the first scheduled grand jury appearance in Chicago. Instead of testifying before the grand jury, Stephanie Weiner and Joe Iosbaker held a press conference outside Federal Plaza in downtown Chicago where more than 100 supporters and media representatives attended.

The Committee to Stop FBI Repression is appealing for continued support — and support is growing. The Duluth, Minn., AFL-CIO Central Labor body representing 17,000 workers unanimously offered its support. Its resolution will be hand delivered to Minnesota’s U.S. senators. Duluth joins the San Francisco Central Labor Council, AFSCME Council 5, Labor for Palestine and local unions passing resolutions and planning actions.

At Oct. 16 nationally coordinated demonstrations against the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, outreach for support included signs such as “FBI Hands Off! Anti-war Activists Opposing War Is Not a Crime!” and literature about the FBI repression. Mick Kelly, whose Minneapolis home was raided, spoke at the 1,000 strong Chicago protest.

A Midwest delegation from Workers World Party supported the anti-FBI participation in the Chicago protest with signs recalling the dirty FBI campaign against the Rev. Martin Luther King and calling for an end to FBI attacks on the anti-war movement and a banner calling for U.S. imperialism to get out of the Middle East. Many went from the Chicago protest to a fundraiser for the legal expenses of those being targeted. Seattle United Against FBI Repression will dis-



PHOTO CHICAGO INDYMEDIA

Chicago, Oct. 16. Anti-war activists support targeted organizers.

tribute support literature Oct 21 at the University of Washington.

If the FBI actions were intended to push back opponents to the bloody U.S. military and imperialist economic aggression around the world, it certainly didn’t work. Katrina Plotz, subpoenaed to the grand jury on Sept. 27, said, “I’ve been a member of the anti-war committee here in Minneapolis for the past four years. And I am proud to be part of a movement that continues to speak out and demonstrate opposition to U.S. wars in the Middle East and U.S. sponsorship of oppressive governments around the world.

“For years, we’ve openly organized rallies, marches and educational events to raise awareness and demand justice for people at home and abroad. We’ve done so under both Republican and Democratic presidents, we’ve marched with tens of thousands of like-minded people, and we’re not going to stop now.”

For updates, solidarity statements, resolutions and more information go to StopFBI.net. Remember to sign the petition at stopfbi.net/sign-the-petition/ or www.iacenter.org/stopfbi/. □

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Justice Dept. keeps lid on rubout of Detroit imam

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Detroit

The U.S. Justice Department summoned numerous Muslim, Arab-American, Asian-American, civil libertarian and civil rights organizations to the downtown McNamara Building on Oct. 13 under the guise of providing a briefing on their investigation into the shooting death of Imam Luqman Ameen Abdullah by FBI agents at a Dearborn warehouse on Oct. 28, 2009. When the meeting was about to convene, the government issued a press release stating that all FBI agents involved in the killing of Imam Abdullah were absolved of any criminal liability.

Several community organizations as well as Rep. John Conyers of Detroit, who is chair of the House Judiciary Committee in the U.S. Congress, had called for an internal Justice Department review of the killing of the imam. The Justice Department report comes on the heels of two other similar findings by both Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox and the Dearborn Police Department.

All three reports released by the law-enforcement agencies involved in the killing have been rejected by Muslim and

community organizations throughout metropolitan Detroit. At a press conference on Oct. 14 at the Muslim Center on Detroit’s Westside, the son of Imam Abdullah stated that the report relied only on interviews given by the agents involved and informants for the FBI who had infiltrated Imam Abdullah’s mosque for over two years.

The report issued by the Dearborn police indicated that counterterrorism agents were flown in from Quantico, Va., to execute the raid. Other agencies present included Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well as the Detroit and Dearborn police departments. Members of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI), which organized three demonstrations in the aftermath of the imam’s killing, stated that Imam Abdullah’s death was “a targeted assassination.”

The Detroit Committee to Stop FBI-Grand Jury Repression will hold its next meeting on Oct. 27 at the offices of MECAWI, located at 5920 Second Ave., just north of the Wayne State University campus at 7:00 p.m.

Azikiwe is editor of the Pan-African News Wire.

U.S. versus clean energy

Workers need jobs, not China-bashing

By **Deirdre Griswold**

The Obama administration has announced it will investigate China for subsidizing its clean-energy industries, which produce wind and solar energy products, advanced batteries and energy-efficient vehicles. This is supposed to be a move for “free trade” and to help U.S. workers, the logic being that if China is forced to give up these subsidies, that will somehow create jobs here.

If the U.S. government really wanted to help the workers and at the same time combat global warming, it would create a jobs program here and employ millions of workers to upgrade and green the infrastructure. This move by Washington has nothing to do with helping U.S. workers, who are in their worst crisis of unemployment since the Great Depression. It is all about blaming China for U.S. capitalism’s debacle while pretending to be friendly to labor in an election year.

This move by the government shows its completely two-faced attitude toward China. On the one hand, it has tried to blame China for global warming — a ridiculous charge, but one repeated endlessly by the imperialist media. On the other, it shows its complete contempt for the environmental movement and science itself by trying to obstruct China’s development of green technology.

Capitalism and global warming

The problem of global warming and climate change, more than almost any other sociopolitical issue, shows that the world’s people need socialist economic planning and cooperation in order to take control of today’s enormously advanced science and technology.

If the means of production continue to belong to a highly privileged few who de-

velop them for their private profit, however, the disastrous changes that have already begun will only multiply and intensify the misery of the masses of people — no matter how many spectacular breakthroughs are made in the fields of physics, chemistry and biology.

There cannot be a turnaround in this dismal situation until the rule of capital has been broken.

It is the people of the United States who most need to grasp this concept, because it is the U.S. ruling class that has done far more than any other to sabotage the setting of limits on greenhouse gas emissions (GGEs) — the main factor in global warming and climate change.

It is this country that for more than a century, with its tremendous industrial growth and its equally huge consumption of oil, coal and natural gas, has spewed carbon dioxide into the air. Some 25 percent of the CO₂ presently trapped in the earth’s atmosphere came from the U.S., a country with only 5 percent of the world’s people.

Because of the power of the corporations and banks that control the energy industry, the automobile industry and the real estate industry, we have no rational system of mass transportation, no green upgrading of city housing, no efficient electrical grid, no city planning to alleviate long commutes, and little green space to moderate summer heat.

Because of the power of the military-industrial-banking complex, the people’s tax money that could be spent on improving all this is instead wasted on vicious wars that big businesses — especially Big Oil — hope will strengthen their weakening grip on the oil-producing countries of the world.

These same banks and corporations control the political system. Because of

their financial hold over legislators, judges and officials, Congress and the White House can’t even consider taking any meaningful steps to cut back on GGEs. Even worse, the political field is more and more dominated by politicians who deny that the problem even exists, despite all the scientific evidence.

So it was not surprising that last December, when 192 countries met in Copenhagen for a U.N. climate summit, even the limited goals that had been proposed by a majority of the countries were blown out of the water by the U.S. delegation. The U.S. rejected attempts to set strong limits on global warming, leaving developing countries, especially in Africa, faced with imminent disasters from climate change.

Lumumba Di-Aping of Sudan, chief negotiator in Copenhagen for the G77 group of 131 developing countries, was in tears when he said that the final agreement had “the lowest level of ambition you can imagine. ... It locks countries into a cycle of poverty forever. Obama has eliminated any difference between him and Bush.”

China-bashing based on myths

Washington’s tactic, then and now, has been to blame China for the failure to reach a meaningful international agreement that would begin to turn around the problem of CO₂ emissions.

China bashers like to cite the fact that more than a year ago China’s CO₂ emissions surpassed those of the U.S. But that is only one-quarter of the story.

First of all, China has four times as many people as the U.S., so China’s per capita emission of greenhouse gases is still only one-quarter that of the U.S.

Secondly, China’s economy has been growing despite the worldwide capitalist economic crisis. Its industrial sector consumes 70 percent of the country’s elec-

tricity. Meanwhile, U.S. industrial output has been declining in recent years, especially since the 2007 economic downturn.

Also, many U.S. manufacturers that used to operate in the U.S. have moved to China and other low-wage countries, moving their consumption of energy and the related emission of greenhouse gases offshore.

U.S. emissions in 2008 (the last year for which figures are available) actually declined by 2.2 percent from 2007, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. According to the EIA itself, this decline was due to three factors: higher energy prices, economic contraction and a lower demand for electricity. (www.eia.doe.gov) None had anything to do with action taken by Washington to curb greenhouse gases.

The truth is that China, not the U.S., has made some very significant moves to begin to wean its economy away from dependence on nonrenewable sources of energy.

China is leading the world in the production of wind turbines, solar panels, energy-efficient lighting and energy-saving technology. It included in its current five-year development plan, which will be completed this year, a 20-percent reduction in energy use per unit of gross domestic product. A similar drive to improve energy efficiency is expected to be included in the next five-year plan, beginning in 2011. (Financial Times, Oct. 18)

The U.S. has no five-year plan or even a one-year plan. This is not a planned economy, it is a capitalist economy. Capital rules, and whatever produces the biggest profit wins out. Capitalists are not held responsible for what they do to the environment; they make profits while society as a whole loses.

For a sustainable, green world we need to get rid of capitalism. □

At Cancún climate talks

Poor countries to demand climate justice

By **Jen Waller**

With the close of the most recent round of climate talks in Tianjin, China, which took place during the first week of October, the world is gearing up for the next major talks in Cancún, Mexico, to begin in late November. The Tianjin talks, with delegates from more than 150 countries, produced very little progress, as the fundamental divide between the desires of rich countries and the needs of poor ones was not resolved.

At this point, few are optimistic that the talks in Cancún will result in a binding global deal. Many fear they will resemble those that took place in Copenhagen last year, which resulted in a nonbinding accord that fails to hold rich countries accountable for their contribution to climate change.

Adjacent to these arguably fruitless U.N.-organized talks, there is a growing global people’s movement for climate justice that is calling for real solutions through system change. This movement can be seen protesting outside the official climate talks, from Copenhagen to Cancún. It has also taken steps to come up with real solutions for the climate crisis, under the leadership of Indigenous Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Morales organized the first World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and

the Rights of Mother Earth, which took place in Cochabamba, Bolivia, this past April. Unlike the Copenhagen conference, which excluded most climate justice activists, nonprofits and even some heads of state from certain discussions, the conference in Cochabamba welcomed all people. With about 30,000 participants from more than 142 countries, the conference addressed the climate crisis as a symptom of the larger disease of unbridled consumption, greed and disrespect for Mother Earth — all characteristics of imperialist capitalism.

People’s Agreement in Cochabamba

The Cochabamba conference called for greenhouse gas emissions to be cut in half by 2020, the creation of an international climate tribunal to judge countries on their contribution to the climate crisis, and the organization of an international referendum on the climate crisis.

The conference culminated in the creation of a People’s Agreement, an extensive document discussing the great dilemma humanity now faces: “to continue on the path of capitalism, depredation and death, or to choose the path of harmony with nature and respect for life.”

A central theme of the text is the concept of climate debt: The attendees of the conference united around the idea that rich countries must assume their respon-

sibility for creating this colossal environmental crisis that is and will continue to be hitting poorer countries first and hardest. “The focus [for the repayment of the debts] must not be only on financial compensation, but also on restorative justice, understood as the restitution of integrity to our Mother Earth and all its beings.”

The People’s Agreement also highlights the fact that the Copenhagen conference featured the leaders of rich countries (under the leadership of President Barack Obama) attempting to undermine the steps taken in the Kyoto Protocol, the only legally binding agreement that addresses greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries. The administration of Bill Clinton had succeeded in weakening the language of that accord but then refused to sign it.

The People’s Agreement calls for the conference in Cancún to approve an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol for a second commitment period from 2013 to 2017 “under which developed countries must agree to significant domestic emissions reductions of at least 50 percent based on 1990 levels, excluding carbon markets or other offset mechanisms that mask the failure of actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.” The entire text of the document can be found at <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/>.

The state of Bolivia released a commu-

niqué on Oct. 10 with an update about the negotiating text to be taken up in Cancún, which was agreed upon by the countries present in Tianjin. The text includes many proposals from Cochabamba, such as limiting the global temperature increase to 1°C; reducing emissions by more than 50 percent by 2017; recognition of the rights of Mother Earth; no new carbon markets; 6 percent of GDP in developed countries to finance climate change actions in developing countries; the formation of an International Climate Justice Tribunal; and full respect for human rights and the rights of Indigenous peoples and climate migrants.

Capitalism vs. Mother Earth

However, the road ahead to Cancún is full of many possible dangers. A document could be imposed by the rich countries that was not agreed upon by all countries, as was done at the last minute in Copenhagen. Therefore, those who hold to the beliefs of the global people’s climate justice movement must show serious support for the demands of the People’s Agreement and the negotiators representing developing countries in Cancún.

As President Morales stated in Cochabamba in April, “We have two paths: either Pachamama or death. We have two paths: Either capitalism dies or Mother Earth dies.” □

Chile's miners show heroism as corporations sabotage safety

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Thirty-three miners from the San José copper and gold mine in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile were rescued on Oct. 13. They had been buried in the mine's refuge more than half a kilometer underground since Aug. 5, when a mine collapse blocked the only exit route to the surface.

The miners' ordeal during those 69 days is proof of the resilience, discipline and courage that the working class is capable of. Surviving on meager food portions — two tablespoons of canned tuna every 48 hours — and enduring intense heat, they kept their spirits up until a high-tech effort brought them back to their loved ones.

The first words surviving miner Luis Urzúa spoke to Chilean right-wing President Sebastián Piñera were, "I hope that this never happens again." The words reveal a profound indictment of the Chilean government and its relation to transnational corporations, many of them U.S.-based.

Urzúa also reflects Chile's history of dictatorship, which still haunts the population. Born to a labor leader who was "disappeared" during the cruel and bloody era of Augusto Pinochet, Urzúa knows firsthand the suffering brought by that U.S.-imposed dictatorship.

In fact, Pinochet's presence is now more evident than in the governments that followed his dictatorship. Piñera is a Harvard graduate and, with an estimated wealth of \$2.2 billion (Forbes, March 10), one of the richest persons in Chile. During Pinochet's regime in the mid 1970s, Piñera was a consultant for the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Piñera won the presidency in January for the right-wing Coalition for Change and took office in March. In him the United States has a loyal servant, working on behalf of the criminal neoliberal policies that U.S. imperialism wants to deepen in Latin America.

Piñera is trying to privatize the national Codelco (Chile's National Copper Corporation), which was formed thanks to assassinated Chilean President Salvador Allende's nationalization of the copper mines in the country. He must change the Constitution, however, in order to pursue this privatization.

Piñera has holdings in multiple sectors of the Chilean economy, particularly in mining but also in telecommunications, airlines and real estate. As minister of labor under Pinochet, his brother José Piñera attempted to destroy labor unions and was responsible for the privatization of the mines, public health services and pension plans. The current unsafe working conditions in the Chilean mines, resulting in accidents causing an average of almost 40 deaths a year, are a direct result of José Piñera's reforms during the dictatorship era.

Chile, although a small country, is the world's main producer of copper. The copper industry is so important to Chile's economy that Allende would refer to it as "Chile's salary." It was Allende's nationalization of the industry that precipitated the infamous U.S. coup on Sept. 11, 1973.

Worldwide capitalist media formidably covered the miners' rescue, raising questions about the purpose of the coverage. Why was there so much coverage when there are so many work-related accidents, including in mining, in many countries? And why not cover the courageous strug-

gles of the Mapuche Indigenous people in Chile, who had been on a prolonged hunger strike for their rights, eliciting international solidarity and attention?

Workers World spoke with Cristian Cuevas, a leader of the Confederation of Chilean Workers (CUT) and president of the Confederation of Copper Workers (CTC). The CTC represents workers directly employed by the mining enterprise, as well as subcontracted workers.

WW: What do you think of the coverage of the rescue operation?

CC: The media made it into a frivolous act, like a "reality show" — the drama that these 33 men lived, buried in a mine due to the irresponsibility of the employers and the state that permits laboring under such unsafe conditions. This is a situation that our CTC has denounced.

When this "reality show" ends, there will remain 300 workers from the same mine who were recently fired without any compensation or benefits. That is why we are fighting against the big media and the transnational corporations. We need our voice to be heard. The president [Piñera], a right-wing entrepreneur, says we are united but does not acknowledge the real drama, which is that [the government and the mine employers] are not respecting international agreements, some of which have even been signed by Chile. Others have not yet been ratified: treaties about labor safety, safety in mines, union freedom and the right to collective bargaining.

Our country is being used and portrayed as a model to copy in terms of free trade, but this trade happens by negatively affecting the lives of workers. What happened at San José is an example.

Chile is seen (by the imperialists) as a model to follow because neoliberalism triumphed here with the military coup d'état, a product of the most recalcitrant right wing. Now these forces are governing again, with a very effective discourse. Transnational corporations are concentrated here. This "reality show" was like a "lavado de imagen" [whitewash].

WW: Can you comment about the interests of U.S. transnational corporations in Chile's mining industry?

CC: In the San José mine the capital is national, but there is also foreign investment.

Transnational capital here is Canadian, British, Australian, from the U.S. But the U.S. forms big transnational consortiums, like BHP Billiton and Anglo American, that operate in our country with very profitable advantages. For example, they take home \$25 million a year without benefiting our country or paying royalties for the use of the land. They leave behind only negative effects.

When we have fought back, we have paid a high cost with layoffs, the canceling of work contracts and the denial of subcontracted workers' rights. As a confederation, we have brought our complaints about the violation of our right to freely exercise our union rights to the International Labor Organization.

The last time it happened was in May, in a struggle of the copper workers with the Collahuasi mine, which is [partly, 44 percent] owned by Anglo American. The workers had been on strike demanding better working conditions, and instead of negotiating the mine administration called on the government. The workers were repressed when a Chilean Air Force plane landed along with more than 10



police cars and at least 300 police shooting at the strikers.

WW: What do you think of Piñera's new labor proposal that he will reveal next week?

CC: Now that Piñera says that he is going to have a new labor treaty, we challenge him to ratify international treaties 155, 176, 87 and 98; on union freedom; on work in the mining sector; and safe conditions in all workplaces.

We also demand health care services, which are currently privatized and do not respond to the needs of the workers. They even profit from these accidents; many times they even cover them up. Workers affected by a work-related illness like silicosis [a respiratory disease caused by inhaling silica dust], have no protection.

In the agricultural industry, the workers in the fruit exporting fields do not have the right to negotiate. During the high season, there are more than 700,000 workers, men and women, who labor in the north zone, where the climate is best for farming. But because these are temporary jobs, the workers are under contract, do not have maternity benefits, nor can they negotiate collectively. They are exposed to pesticides that are forbidden in the U.S. but applied here, generating a

series of health problems for those who work in the fields. It is a tragedy. Without the possibility of negotiation, their organization is very precarious.

But we continue struggling and we have very firm politics. We are working to organize common fronts with the workers of the mining, metallurgic and energy sectors. But we have to engage in this struggle and fight, updating the working class to the new phenomena, understanding where the changes are, adapting our language and using the technology to wage these battles. This is our task. It is about ideology. The working class has to find a way to unite and fight in a common front.

There is a new, young generation of workers who are doing precisely that, although the task is not easy. We need a greater effort, and we need the solidarity from all the peoples, including from the U.S. We welcome you to visit our website, www.confederaciondelcobre.cl, and to keep in contact with us. We call on class solidarity: to resurrect the spirit of past labor struggles; to push forward the labor movement in this 21st century; to recuperate the memory of the glorious workers from Santa María de Iquique in Chile and of the workers in Chicago in the U.S.

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Peace delegation to Iran says Stop U.S. war plans

Continued from page 1

At the meeting's end participants decided to begin an international effort based on the demands and focus of no intervention or war, and respecting the sovereignty and self-determination of Iran. This effort will immediately begin to build solidarity internationally and especially in the U.S. with a factual campaign to dispel the lies. HOLA drafted a statement to that effect, which the organizations present endorsed.

A note about Iranian society

The delegation got a great chance to interact with many people at the Fourth International Digital Media Festival, which is a convention showcasing the latest advances in Internet and consumer software communications. This included the latest cell phones and video games, with booths showcasing how communication technology can promote anti-imperialist ideas. Tehran itself is a modern city of 15 million people filled with high-rise apartment houses and well-maintained freeways and infrastructure.

The solidarity delegation was allowed to take advantage of the well-publicized and well-trafficked event with booths displaying each visiting organization's anti-war and social justice messages. None of the delegates' materials or displays were censored or challenged by government authorities at the festival.

The many students, women and men of Iran and visitors from other countries at the festival spoke freely with members of the delegation at the booths, expressing both criticisms and praise for the Iranian government. Many young students even

showed they believed the romanticized, rosy and luxurious picture of the U.S. presented in the Hollywood movies prevalent in Iran. But no one, especially the students, wanted U.S. war against Iran, nor did they want their nation's sovereignty taken away.

At the International Action Center and Bail Out the People booths, videos of police repression in the U.S. and protests against racism on Sept. 11 helped to show a more balanced view of life in the U.S.

This free interchange and the wide-ranging questions contradicted the Western media's false image of a tightly controlled society in Iran.

Some U.S. delegates asked how many Iranian films were available in the U.S. A prominent Iranian director told the delegation that he was repeatedly denied a visa to visit the U.S., even for the purpose of filming President Ahmadinejad's latest visit to the U.N.

During the exchanges at the booths, the Iranian sisters and brothers, activists in HOLA and ordinary participants at the event, even the look in a child's eyes, challenged the solidarity delegation to stop U.S. war against Iran and make that a major component of the struggle to stop all U.S. wars abroad and at home.

The IAC has put on its website the appeal asking people to sign on to SI — Solidarity with Iran — which demands that the U.S. (1) Lift economic sanctions against Iran, (2) Recognize the right of Iran to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and (3) Stop military threats against Iran. See iacenter.org/iran/iran-signon101610/ to sign on. □

The one way out

The two wars of aggression begun by the Bush administration and continued by the Democrats — with the support of the great bulk of the U.S. ruling class — have turned into a net loss for all but the military-industrial complex, the oil industry and a few top generals.

The Oct. 17 New York Times had two major articles reflecting this dilemma.

In Afghanistan, according to the Times, NATO was facilitating talks between the Taliban and the puppet government while it bombed and shelled Taliban fighters to push them to negotiate. The Times conclusion was that in the “endgame” going on, “so many things could go wrong” for imperialism. One was that support for the U.S. in Pakistan has dwindled each time a drone killed Pakistani civilians or soldiers.

In Iraq, which the Pentagon has chalked up as a victory by surge, the Times found the victory slipping away. The “Awakening Councils,” made up of Sunnis who abandoned the resistance in 2007 for pay and because they didn’t want to fight the U.S., al-Qaeda and the Baghdad regime at the same time, are moving back into the ranks of the Iraqi resistance. While it is unclear just how the struggle will advance, it is clear this means trouble for Washington.

In further news, the U.S. Army was caught lying about making its recruitment quota. The generals had simply lowered the goals. The Army is still unable to build up enough forces to avert sending the same troops three, four and

five times to combat zones.

The occupations are becoming quagmires. This is bad news for U.S. imperialism. That is not the same, however, as being bad news for the Afghans, the Iraqis or for the U.S. working class.

Quite the opposite is true. If the wars and occupations were going well for the Pentagon and the State Department, you could be sure that the most militarist U.S. elements would be pushing for the next war and the next conquest. They would be calling for outright aggression against Iran, or even China. U.S. working-class youth, and especially the vast populations in those countries, would be in danger of becoming new victims of the imperialists’ drive to expand their markets.

After decades of war and suffering in Afghanistan and Iraq, with much exhaustion of the population, it is hard to predict what social forces would be in charge should the imperialists be forced to leave. The point is that they would be sovereign Afghans and Iraqis. They wouldn’t be imperialist overlords. Every nation has the right to self-determination, to resist being run by invaders or their hand-picked stooges.

The U.S. should get out, and do it now. It may be a loss for the U.S. bankers, gun-runners and generals, but it would be a step forward for those regions of the world. And it would be a step forward for the working class here in the United States, which is exploited and kept politically hamstrung by the same imperialist ruling class. □

MUNDO OBRERO

Nueva ley en Bolivia garantiza igualdad

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vestigando incidentes racistas desde hace algunos años.

La ley prohíbe el racismo y la discriminación por cualquier agencia gubernamental, en cualquier espacio público, o por cualquier individuo o grupo privado.

En un país con 34 grupos indígenas diferentes, una provisión de la ley que establece “la asistencia de intérpretes en procedimientos administrativos y/o judiciales, cuando alguna de las partes hable su idioma o dialecto nativo” es un avance en la lucha por los derechos de estos grupos. Otras garantías son el acceso a la educación pública o privada; oportunidades equitativas de acceso y condiciones igualitarias de trabajo; acceso a servicios médicos profesionales o tradicionales, y la participación del/la paciente en las decisiones sobre su tratamiento médico o terapéutico, entre muchos otros derechos humanos que ahora están protegidos por esta ley.

Opositores derechistas inmediatamente criticaron la ley, diciendo que atenta contra los derechos de los periódicos a la libre expresión. A esto responde García Linera que “Esta ley sencillamente dice que los medios de difusión no pueden diseminar o permitir que sean diseminados mensajes de contenido racista o discriminatorio”. Añadiendo que “tenemos que combatir una cultura de racismo . . . No olvidemos que hasta hace cuatro años los/as indígenas eran discriminados/as y abusados/as, menospreciados/as en su

presencia social y económica con epítetos y ataques racistas”.

El racismo ha impregnado la sociedad boliviana desde los años 1500s cuando los conquistadores españoles esclavizaron a los hombres indígenas, forzándolos a trabajar en las minas de plata donde murió la mayoría. Más tarde, terratenientes ricos instituyeron el sistema de “pongueaje” bajo el cual los indígenas eran forzados a trabajar como peones, sus tierras robadas y sus derechos destruidos. Hasta la clase trabajadora urbana tenía que luchar por el derecho a usar transporte público en los años 40s. Esta lucha fue ganada por la Federación Obrera Femenina, la cual fue fundada por trabajadoras vendedoras organizadas del mercado quienes eran todas indígenas.

Esta ley nueva anti-racista es otro triunfo de la clase trabajadora y de los/as oprimidos/as de Bolivia. □

Racist policy targets immigrant students

Continued from page 6

these universities never have space for all of their qualified applicants.

In addition, the Board is requiring that each school verify the legal status of each student who is accepted. While there are several possible options, all of them will cost tens of thousands of dollars, a most unnecessary expense when the education budgets of these same schools have been cut by millions of dollars.

Washington & Tel Aviv use talks to cover land grab

By Gene Clancy

The message was as grim and clear as a KKK cross burning. “Mosques, we burn,” said a warning scribbled at the door of the smoke-smudged mosque of Beit Fajjar, south of Bethlehem in Palestine’s West Bank.

The green-carpeted floor of the mosque was burned to a black crust in a dozen places where it had been doused with kerosene and set alight in the middle of the night on Oct. 4. The fire scorched a dozen copies of the Quran.

A Zionist “Star of David” symbol and the words “Price Tag” were found scrawled over the mosque’s doorway. Militant Israeli settlers have coined the term to warn of the “cost” of any attempt to halt their building of new settlements on Palestinian land. (Reuters, Oct. 2)

Beit Fajjar is a dusty village of stone-cutting mills on a dead-end road outside the sprawling Jewish settlement of Gush Etzion, which is closed to Palestinians.

Palestinians said that Israeli settlers were behind the attack, and the Israeli government did not deny it. The Israeli government maintains the roadblocks, an apartheid wall and separate roads to allegedly protect Jews throughout the West Bank, and in general it backs the settlers in every way.

“The settlers’ message is: Terrorize the Palestinian people,” said Mohammad Hussein, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who came to inspect the damage and talk to the locals. “Crimes like these do not terrorize the Palestinian people. On the contrary, such attacks will only embolden the Palestinian people and increase our determination to achieve all of our rights,” he told Reuters.

On Sept. 26, the Israeli government ended its temporary moratorium on new settlements on Palestine’s West Bank. On Oct. 12, despite U.S. pressure, the Palestinian Authority said that it could not continue peace talks with Israel unless the Israelis stopped their illegal policy of building new settlements.

Both the U.S. and Israel have attempted to downplay if not dismiss entirely the impact of settlement construction and the 43-year occupation of the Palestinian territories, but a brief glance at a map of the West Bank, interlaced with settlements, reveals the opposite..

Today, Israel has more than 130 settlements and 100 “outposts” in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem with a population of more than a half million — in total violation of international law. These heavily fortified settlements are supported by a Jewish-only road network, checkpoints, military bases and a massive 480-mile-long barrier that segments and isolates the West Bank’s major Palestinian population centers from each other and from Palestinian East Jerusalem.

According to an Israel B’Tselem Human Rights Organization report this year, the

Israeli settlers control 42 percent of the West Bank; other estimates are as high as 59 percent. Under the terms of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, negotiations to decide the fate of the settlers were to conclude after five years. Today, 17 years after the Oslo process began, the endless negotiations and settlement construction continue.

The Israeli organization Peace Now has determined that more than 39 percent of the settlements are built on private Palestinian property, which is even a violation of Israeli law. It is obvious that the so-called “peace process” is being used as a cover while the Israeli regime encourages the systematic theft of Palestinian land.

Underlying these figures is the human toll of the settlements and the settlers on Palestinians. The Zionist settlers have frequently damaged and uprooted Palestinian olive groves and have harassed and attacked Palestinian farmers, shepherds and schoolchildren.

In September, an Israeli settler shot and killed an unarmed Palestinian man in the Jerusalem suburb of Issawiya. In the ensuing protests, Israeli police fired tear gas, which suffocated an 18-month-old Palestinian child.

Although these incidents are shocking, they are not isolated. As B’Tselem has documented, settler attacks against Palestinians are not only routine, but are escalating. These acts usually go unpunished by the Israeli authorities, which further emboldens the settlers and encourages further acts of violence.

This was shown by settlers’ celebrations marking the end of the settlement-building “freeze” and by their increasingly brazen attacks on Palestinian property to prevent any Israeli concessions in the “peace” talks or state attempts to curtail their activities. The Zionist settlers act as if they are above all laws, and neither the U.S. nor Israel has given them reason to believe otherwise. In fact, the Israeli government does not just “allow” the settlers to take Palestinian land; it actively finances them with government-backed mortgages.

Six years ago, the International Court of Justice in The Hague reaffirmed that Israel’s wall in the West Bank and supporting infrastructure, including the settlements, were in violation of international law. In spite of its best efforts to gloss over this reality, Israel’s settlement policy is a reminder that the Zionists’ true goal is not peace, but expansionism and conquest.

Some establishment media analysts have concluded that the latest round of peace talks is bound to fail, and that this is because “the United States [has] lost any leverage with Israel and any chance of brokering a peace accord.” (Huffington Post, Oct. 15)

In reality, the U.S. has plenty of “leverage.” The U.S. government gives Israel billions of dollars in military and economic aid each year. Washington is often the sole defender of horrific Israeli actions and policies and threatens military intervention against any country or organization that resists Israeli expansion.

If the U.S. government were truly serious about stopping Israeli expansionism and attacks on Palestinians and recognition of their rights, administration officials would withhold the massive allocations of financial and military support. The real question is not why the U.S. can’t control Israel, but rather why both countries continue to pursue the causes of imperialism and expansionism in the Middle East in open defiance of world opinion. □

Imperialist states meet in Mali to plan plunder of Africa

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Representatives from the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia gathered in the capital of the West African country of Mali — Bamako — on Oct. 13-14 to discuss the coordination of intelligence and military operations in North and West Africa.

These Group of 8 countries said the conference was held to address the growing influence of armed opposition groups in the Maghreb and the Sahel, groups which they claim are affiliates of al-Qaida.

The real interests that lie behind the U.S. and G8 involvement in the Maghreb and Sahel, however, are the desire to maintain control over the strategic minerals and resources of the area and to block greater involvement by the People's Republic of China.

People within North America and Western Europe must keep in mind that the corporate media and government emphasis on “battling terrorism” in the region is designed to build public opinion in support of increasing intelligence and military intervention on the African continent.

Speaking diplomatically, a leading officer within the Malian military, Col. Yamoussa Camara, told the Associated Press on Oct. 18 that there is significant opposition to direct imperialist intervention in the region even under the guise of “fighting terrorism.” Camara noted, “Given our past, we are not very receptive to foreign forces getting directly involved in military operations here, whatever their motives might be.”

Perhaps the Malian colonel was thinking of the similarity between the Bamako meeting and the 1884 Berlin meeting, where 14 European imperialist countries — the U.S., a weaker power then,

was invited but didn't participate — got together in German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's offices and carved up Africa, seizing the various parts as their colonies to plunder. Most of the larger European countries were present at both the Berlin and Bamako meetings, this time with the U.S. playing the leading role and Japan and Canada invited.

U.S. interests in the Maghreb-Sahel

There are increasing economic and military interests on the part of U.S. imperialism in the regions of North and West Africa. A greater reliance on oil and gas from Africa as well as the increased competition with the People's Republic of China have intensified Washington's drive for greater influence in regions where France has been the dominant colonial power.

Professor of International Relations Yahia H. Zoubir, writing for the establishment British journal *International Affairs* (Vol. 85, 2009, 977-995), noted two major interests guiding U.S. policy in the region: “The first are linked to America's energy needs, and focus on oil and gas in Algeria, Chad and Libya, and perhaps in Mali and Mauritania; they also favor the development of a stronger regional entity, which would provide a potentially important market for U.S. businesses, especially since competition has heightened with China's recent gains in Africa.”

Zoubir illustrates that the U.S. “has slowly but surely succeeded in creating a security network that brings together the Maghreb and Sahel states.” Zoubir first writes that “Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb carries out lethal attacks in Algeria and resorts to kidnappings of foreign nationals,” but then points out that “it has nonetheless been exaggerated; according to some, it has actually been fabricated.”

Zoubir says plainly that “the real men-

ace in the region stems from poverty, bad governance, lack of democracy, corruption and economic mismanagement.” He points out that the countries within the region “are among the poorest in the world; and it is these very countries that are being assembled in the new U.S.-led security arrangements.”

Some African states boycott meeting

There were numerous African states within the region that were represented at the Bamako meeting, including Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Morocco, Senegal and of course the host country, Mali. Algeria boycotted the meeting, disagreeing over the strategy being discussed by the group.

This meeting was convened under the leadership of the Canadian government, which has substantial mining interests in the region and is also the current G8 chair. Canadian ambassador to Mali, Virginie Saint-Louis, pointed out that the Western states must be sensitive about their involvement in the region. (Associated Press, Oct. 18)

Disregarding such sensitivity, in September French military forces dispatched dozens of troops and aircraft in an operation purportedly designed to search for contractors who were seized while working in northern Niger in a uranium mining outpost. The contractors were working for the French nuclear firm Areva, which has enormous interests in Niger.

Prior to the Niger intervention, in June French military units staged a raid with Mauritanian troops on al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) inside of Mali. Although the French said that the raid was carried out to free one of their nationals who was being held hostage, the person whom they were out to rescue was killed in the operation.

Col. Camara of Mali said that the West-

ern states should focus most of their attention on providing military hardware and counterterrorism training to African states in the region. This sentiment was also reflected in comments made by Col. Iro Oumarou of Niger, who said, “What we'd like from Western countries in general is training, specialized equipment and especially support in intelligence gathering.” (Associated Press, Oct. 18)

The meeting in Mali came in the aftermath of a similar gathering on Sept. 26 in Tamanrasset, Algeria, a former French military outpost during the colonial period. The meeting agreed to establish a joint intelligence gathering and coordination center that would include representatives from Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

As a result of the meeting in Tamanrasset, a coordinating body was set up in Algiers that includes the top intelligence officers of the four states: Major-General Attafi of Algeria, Colonel Mamy Coulibaly of Mali, Mohamed Ould Meguett of Mauritania and Commissioner Mamane Chekaraou of Niger. They named the coordinating structure the Sahel-Saharan Intelligence Center.

There are plans now to make the Center operational in order to coordinate its activities with the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (AC-SRT), which is a part of the African Union Peace and Security Council located in El-Harach, a suburb outside the Algerian capital of Algiers.

Despite these efforts to coordinate activity between the Maghreb states and the G8 countries, there is still tremendous distrust and division among the various states in the region.

There is deep distrust between Algeria and Morocco over the still unresolved question of independence for the Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony now under the control of Rabat. □

FRANCE

Ninth day of action confronts Sarkozy's austerity

By **John Catalinotto**

French workers took to the streets again on Oct. 19. It was their ninth day of action since September and their fourth general strike in a month; these strikes have involved as many as 3 million workers at a time.

A general strike on Oct. 12 scheduled to last one day became an unlimited strike in some sectors, especially by public transport workers, truckers and refinery workers. They have stopped or impeded much transportation in the country — truckers drive at a snail's pace on the highways and gas stations run dry.

A key element in the week before this latest general strike has been the growing presence of high-school youth in the struggle. Hundreds of schools were closed down and young people have been joining the demonstrations. In some of the 260 cities affected on Oct. 19, confrontations have taken place between reactionary President Nicolas Sarkozy's police and the youth, notably in Lyon.

The key issue is still the attempt by Sarkozy and his allies in Parliament to impose an austerity program on the workers, starting off with an increase in the retirement age. This has infuriated the French workers at a time when there

has been persistent high unemployment and especially because young people are unable to find stable jobs protected by a work contract. This issue has united older workers with the young and has won over most of those in-between.

The central point involves the government's plan to increase the beginning age for retirement from 60 to 62 years and the age at which workers can get a full pension from 65 to 67. There are also new requirements for the number of years employed.

While U.S. workers may react that this seems good compared to current U.S. requirements for retiring and receiving Social Security, the workers in France earned these benefits in struggle and they won't give them up without a fight.

According to the French Institute of Public Opinion, 71 percent of the public in France has supported the strikers. More than 42 percent of the population consider the strike and other struggle actions of the unions “absolutely justified” and would support their extension in the coming days. Especially committed to this struggle are disadvantaged women, 75 percent of whom back the strike, and young people between the ages of 18 and 24, of whom the whopping figure of 84 percent support the strikers. (ifop.com)

There is growing working-class anger

over Sarkozy's policies because he has also pushed for a “protective shield” that sets a limit to the taxes imposed on France's super-rich. Workers rightfully can see that they will have to work earlier and longer in order to retire, with fewer years of retirement, while the rich can retire even earlier.

When Sarkozy laid down this utter provocation to the working class, he first made a racist attack on Roma (Gypsy) immigrants, forcing them to return to Romania on French planes. He apparently hoped that this assault on an even more oppressed grouping would distract the workers from their own struggle and provide a scapegoat.

Sarkozy isn't the first to try this “divide and conquer” tactic. From the U.S. to Western and Central Europe, right-wingers are targeting immigrants and Muslims, among others. But in Sarkozy's case the ploy failed. Sections of French workers have even raised slogans of solidarity with the Roma people, and no one was distracted from the class struggle.



The French Assembly voted to support Sarkozy's attempt to increase the retirement age. The Senate votes sometime before Oct. 23, although it has to deal with 400 amendments the opposition added. Sarkozy and his allies' pose indicates that the French capitalists are determined to challenge the workers. The strikes, on the other hand, as well as the mood indicated by the opinion poll

and the militancy of the youth, show that the workers are determined to fight to defend their benefits.

It has been a tradition in French history that the class struggle, once it bursts into the open, goes much further toward completion than in other European countries. This was true with the 1789-1793 revolution, with the Paris Commune of 1871 and the general strikes of 1936 and 1968. It is worth watching to see if the class struggle against austerity, begun so heroically by the workers in Greece this year, is spreading to a large and powerful imperialist country. And to wonder what impact it will have this side of the Atlantic.

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El dinero no puede comprar amigos

El Pentágono pierde fuerza en Afganistán, Pakistán

Por Deirdre Griswold

Hay mucho que aprender del hecho indiscutible de que los militares de EEUU, a pesar de todo su armamento de alta tecnología y los miles de millones de dólares de que dispone, ha perdido el control de la situación en Afganistán y ha obligado incluso al gobierno corrupto paquistaní denunciar los ataques del Pentágono como “intolerable” y a cerrado partes de su frontera con Afganistán.

El Pentágono había argumentado que una “oleada” de decenas de miles de tropas adicionales de EEUU a Afganistán tornaría la guerra a su favor y ganarse a la población. Es evidente que ha ocurrido lo contrario.

Cuanto más los EEUU mata y destruye, sus casas, su ganado y sus cultivos, más la gente odia a los invasores. La única “base social” las fuerzas de ocupación puede contar son los que pagan por su lealtad — y ahora parece que incluso algunos de ellos están en secreto de la resistencia y puede estar en la nómina de EEUU por razones tácticas.

Resulta que muchas de las personas que trabajan para las fuerzas de ocupación de la OTAN, guardando sus bases militares, son partidarios de la resistencia — normalmente se identifican en los medios occidentales como “los talibanes”, aunque otros grupos políticos también se oponen activamente a la ocupación de EEUU y la guerra.

El Comité de Servicios Armados del Senado acaba de publicar un informe sobre una investigación que llevó a cabo sobre la seguridad de las bases de EEUU en Afganistán. Parece que el Pentágono da a empresas privadas de EEUU el trabajo de seguridad, que a su vez se embolsan grandes ganancias, ya que subcontratar el trabajo a los afganos locales.

El comité del Senado descubrió que el Pentágono permite que “se ocupa de seguridad local, entre los comandantes militares estadounidenses, las compañías occidentales de contratación y señores de la guerra afganos que están estrechamente

relacionados con la insurgencia violenta”. (The New York Times, 07 de octubre)

El artículo del Times añade: “Las últimas revelaciones seguir una serie de informes, incluidos artículos en The New York Times y el testimonio ante un comité de la Cámara, que describe los sobornos pagados por los contratistas a los señores de la guerra talibanes y otros para hacer que los convoyes de suministro para el ejército estadounidense sea siempre un paso seguro.”

El gobierno de EEUU tiene cerca de 100.000 soldados en Afganistán en este momento. A insistencia de Washington, 20.000 soldados adicionales han sido enviados allí por otros países.

La máxima dirección política en el Afganistán fue impuesta por los Estados Unidos. Fueron agentes de EEUU que se encuentran Hamid Karzai — cuando se retiraba por un salario de grasa con Unocal, una empresa de energía de EEUU — y arreglado lo de “conducir a la nación” después de los EEUU invadió Afganistán en 2001. Después de las elecciones cocido, se convirtió en presidente Karzai de Afganistán y sigue manteniendo ese título, a pesar de que es cínicamente a que se refiere a muchos afganos y extranjeros como el “alcalde de Kabul”, ya que su autoridad no se extiende mucho más allá de la capital.

El gobierno de Karzai está formado por mercenarios pagados en gran parte con fondos de EEUU y el narco-dólares. Su “reelección” era tan torcida que fue cuestionada incluso por los observadores occidentales.

Ninguna cantidad de dólares y poder de fuego puede ganar a la gente “corazones y mentes”. Sólo la justicia puede hacer eso, y no hay justicia en absoluto en la conquista imperialista. Está motivada por la más crasa hambre de superganancias. En el caso de Afganistán ubicado estratégicamente, el objetivo es el control sobre el suroeste de Asia, la región más rica del mundo en petróleo y gas. Los miles de millones de dólares que el gobierno de EEUU gasta para obtener estas ganancias solo beneficia a los propietarios super-ricos de las empresas de energía, no de los traba-

jadores en los EEUU, Afganistán o en cualquier otro lugar.

Convoyes atrapados en Pakistán

Pakistán, vecino de Afganistán hacia el sudeste, también se ve envuelto en esta guerra. El Pentágono lo utiliza como una ruta de reabastecimiento para las grandes cantidades de municiones y provisiones que necesita sus tropas para sostener la guerra. Grandes convoyes de camiones transportan flete descargado en los puertos de Pakistán hacia el norte a la frontera y luego a través del paso de Khyber a las bases militares de Estados Unidos y la OTAN en Afganistán.

Estos convoyes fueron presa fácil en la primera semana de octubre. El gobierno paquistaní cerró varios cruces de frontera hacia Afganistán y los camiones hicieron cola por kilómetros. Ellos fueron atacados por los insurgentes y bandidos. Camiones de combustible explotaron en explosiones espectaculares mientras que sus conductores dispersaron buscando cobertura.

¿Por qué el gobierno de Pakistán desafió a los EEUU cerrando la frontera? Se ha acordado con la mayoría de las demandas del Pentágono. Aviones no tripulados de EEUU han enviado misiles chocar contra aldeas paquistaníes, donde el Pentágono sospecha que fue la simpatía por los grupos de resistencia islámica. Esto ha estado ocurriendo durante mucho tiempo.

Pero el colmo llegó cuando helicópteros de Estados Unidos y la OTAN atacaron dos puestos fronterizos de Pakistán, matando a varios guardias fronterizos. Pakistán dijo que los ataques eran “intolerables” y respondió el 30 de septiembre,

cerrando los puntos de cruce fronterizo.

Guerra más larga en la historia de EEUU

Cuando la administración Bush invadió Afganistán en 2001, dijo que iba cazando un relativamente pequeño grupo insurgente liderado por Osama bin Laden, la que alegaba estaba detrás de los ataques contra las Torres Gemelas y el Pentágono.

El pueblo de los Estados Unidos fue asegurado que esto iba a ser una operación quirúrgica y terminaría pronto.

Después de ocho años de Bush, el electorado votó por Barack Obama en 2008, en la creencia de que la nueva administración demócrata rápidamente iniciaría el proceso de retirada de Irak y Afganistán. En su lugar, ha habido un “aumento” de tropas enviadas a Afganistán.

El conflicto en el Afganistán es ahora la más larga guerra que los EEUU ha luchado en toda su historia. Gobierno y funcionarios militares dicen que cualquier reducción de los efectivos dependerá de “las condiciones de seguridad” en las diferentes áreas de Afganistán.

Esta es una receta para la guerra sin fin, ya que la adherencia tanto del régimen de Karzai y las fuerzas de invasión continúan debilitándose y la popularidad de la resistencia incrementa.

Lo único que puede romper este punto muerto y traer las tropas a casa es cuando la gente en los EEUU, que están sufriendo de una severa crisis económica y han demostrado en muchas encuestas que están en contra de estas guerras costosas, toman sus demandas a las calles en lugar de confiar en las urnas para lograr la paz. □

Nueva ley en Bolivia garantiza igualdad

Por Donna Lazarus

El 8 de octubre Evo Morales, presidente del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, firmó una nueva ley que prohíbe el racismo y toda forma de discriminación. Esta ley es un paso importante para la población mayoritaria indígena de Bolivia y también para la comunidad afro-boliviana las cuales han sufrido 500 años de opresión.

Como explicó el Vice Presidente Álvaro García Linera, “Esta ley protege y garantiza el trato igualitario para toda la gente”. La ley provee penalidades por cualquier forma de racismo y discriminación “fundada en razón de sexo, color, edad, orientación sexual, identidad de género,

origen, cultura, nacionalidad, ciudadanía, idioma, credo religioso, ideología, filiación política o filosófica, estado civil, condición económica social, tipo de ocupación, grado de instrucción, discapacidad, embarazo, u otras condiciones previstas en la Ley ...” (Ley contra el racismo ...).

La ley provee para la creación de una institución gubernamental nueva llamada el Consejo Nacional Contra el Racismo y Toda Forma de Discriminación, y su líder será elegido/a por el Senado por un plazo de cinco años. Este consejo reemplazará la agencia gubernamental actual que ha ido sistemáticamente registrando e in-

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